Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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After these chalk sketches it will not be difficult to paint an ear. From a distance and with the glass, you will soon see that it won't do to represent the ridges of the ear as hard, white lines of equal brightness throughout, nor the hollows as pits of bottomless black. You will see how full of gradation are both the lines of light and the spaces of shade; the play of surface, as in the true model of a mountain land or a beautiful bas-relief, will force itself upon you without much trouble on your part, so long as you don't sit over your work, niggling and poring into the detail. "Art is athletic," says Mr. Ruskin, and this is a case in point.

In painting, after laying in your first wash, and taking out the light, you will of course find that more retouching is needed than usual in our studies, both in the matter of adding darks and in taking out lights. It is impossible, I think, to give any very precise rules as to the amount of retouching. Remember, however, that in adding darks you should add colour, and not go on shading with black or neutral tint. In taking out lights, as they are to be soft and delicate, wash with the brush-point cautiously, and don't scratch with a knife or scrub with a rag, until you have painted a good many dozen of ears. And always walk back, comparing your model and your drawing at a distance. Do not forget to put in the background, so to speak—the hair behind and above the ear, and a bit of the colour of the cheek beside it; for this will keep your tone and colour in balance. In a word, paint this study as if you were painting a flower, with the grace of a lily and the blush of a rose.

THE MONTHS.

By House of Education Students.

No. IX. By A. Cox.

THE NEW FOREST DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST.

One August, I spent a most delightful time in the New Forest, for it is a splendid place to study nature, whether flowers, birds, or animals. We will consider the flowers first.

Flowers.—The New Forest is a district peculiarly rich in wild flowers, and there are at least two varieties, the wild gladiolus and the isnardia, which are now found nowhere else in England. During the month of August we—my brother C—— and I—identified 153 varieties.

The immediate neighbourhood of our house did not provide us with many of the less common flowers, though earlier in the year as many as eleven species of the orchis can be found. As it was we found a late specimen of the bee orchis (*Ophrys apifera*) growing by the river, and another that we could not identify. Many of the flowers were quite new to me. The common ragwort (*Senecio Jacobæa*) forms quite a feature of the New Forest. Its abundance is remarkable, and its luxuriant growth is extraordinary. It often grows four feet high, and in wet pastures it makes quite a blaze of yellow; it also grows profusely in the hedgerows.

One day during a walk through a lovely bit of wood and undergrowth, a sudden turn of the path gave a glimpse of the rivulet running close by, with ferns growing everywhere, and a grand plant of tall ragwort in the foreground, with its large bright yellow flowers outlined against the dark green of some firs in the background. I have also seen this ragwort make a most effective bit of colour, as a natural border to a long stretch of road leading through the Forest.

The heath at times would grow in the same luxuriant manner just on the edges of the roads. Most of the open places are covered with heath and ling, the latter not very noticeable

among the brighter coloured heath, for though the ling may be considered by some a more delicate and pretty plant, it is the wonderful colour of the heath which constitutes its beauty. A broad patch of heath once seen in its full glory can never be forgotten. During an expedition to Cadnan Woods I noticed for the first time the great beauty of the dwarf furze (*Ulex nanas*) intertwined among the heath, the two colours blending beautifully together. This dwarf furze is sometimes confounded with the common furze (*Ulex Europæus*) which flowers in June. However, it is a distinct species, and may be distinguished by the spreading wings of its flowers, and usually appears with the heath. The cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) always grew in company with the fine-leaved heath (*Erica cinerea*).

The musk mallow (*Malva moschata*) was to be seen frequently, generally on banks and in the hedges, and it certainly is one of the most beautiful of the New Forest flowers.

Common centaury (*Erythræa Centaurium*) grows more abundantly in the New Forest district than anywhere else I have seen. In the fields near Park we found the common centaury growing in quite thick clumps. The purple loosestrife (*Lythrum Salicaria*) grows everywhere. It is a handsome plant, and with its glorious colouring has a beautiful effect as it grows on the banks of rivers, and in damp or marshy places. When talking of the New Forest flowers, one must not forget the great yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), for it grows most plentifully, and is a beautiful tall plant with its clear yellow flowers showing out amidst the surrounding green.

Another plant which is most plentiful in the New Forest is the honeysuckle. It grows here as it grows nowhere else in England; it twines with its fragrant flowers in and out of the rough undergrowth, or twists itself in close embrace round the great trees of the forest. To not a few its embrace proves fatal; but to the many that survive it lends a new and great beauty.

Common vervain (*Verbena officinalis*) grows on the green in front of our house and looks most pretty with its slender lilac spikes. This graceful plant was held in great veneration by the ancients, who used it in sacrifices and at other religious ceremonies.

The premorse scabious or devil's bit (*Scabiosa succisa*), which grew so plentifully in the woods, was all cut short, whole patches of it. Evidently the stalks and flowers are of some use round here, perhaps they serve as fodder.

All the flowers of the New Forest grew most plentifully and luxuriantly. I especially noticed the forget-me-not, often growing in the ditches with the brooklime (*Veronica Beccabunga*). Also the masses of yellow toad flax (*Linaria vulgaris*) in the hedges, and the fine specimens of ragged robin (*Lychnis Flos-Cuculi*). All the varieties of mint appear to grow here, and corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*) and hairy mint (*Mentha aquatica*) most plentifully.

A very pretty road past Milford was a most favourite place for flowers. The very common black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) grew in such abundance that it made a beautiful purple patch of colour by the roadside, and the scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*) grew in beautiful masses on the bank alongside the road. The thistles abound everywhere, and I thought the uncommon slender-flowered thistle (*Carduus tenuiflorus*) with its light pink heads was one of the finest.

The black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), with its drooping umbels of white flowers and black globular berries, is a most handsome plant; likewise the greater skull-cap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) which grows at an unusual height on the banks of the Boldre river.

The curious round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), uncommon in some parts of England, we found in profusion in the marshy parts of the open heath. Though it was so abundant, I thought it grew rather poorly. Both the long-leaved sundew (*D. longifolia*) and the great sundew (*D. Anglica*) grow on the heaths. The uncommon lesser skull-cap (*Scutellaria minor*) was rather plentiful, growing in marshy places, though we found some by the roadside, and another uncommon plant, white horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), grew very finely. Common tutsan (*Hypericum androsæmum*), one of the rarer St. John's worts, grew not far from the house. We found it twice in different woods, but the petals had just dropped, and we saw the red glossy berry-like capsules, which looked very pretty with the spreading leaves beneath.

One fine sunny day we spent in the midst of the forest. While

strolling through the woods we came across that really pretty parasite, the lesser dodder (*Cuscuta Epithymum*), which twists its leafless stems round heath, heather or furze. The flowers are of a lovely light flesh-colour, and its red thread-like stems add to its charm. We continued our way by the side of a very marshy stream, which was covered with marsh St. John's wort (*Hypericum elodes*), bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), and lesser skull-cap. This marsh St. John's wort is rather uncommon and very unlike others of its species. Its lovely yellow flowers harmonised well with the rose-coloured bell flowers of the bog pimpernel.

Another day we made an expedition to Sowley Pond, a lovely piece of water surrounded by trees. In a field close by, the curious viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) grew. Its roots are very long, descending perpendicularly into the ground. We then went on to Park, and spent some time by the sea. On the shore we found several sea plants ; the yellow-horned poppy (*Glaucium luteum*) in the shingly beach, the sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) with its large dense blue heads of flowers, and two rather ugly plants, the sea beet (*Beta maritima*) with its large fleshy, glossy leaves, and spreading-fruited orache (*Atriplex patula*), a common weed with straggling stems. There was, however, a very pretty white flower, hemlock stork's bill (*Erodium cicutarium*).

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Many ferns grow on the banks of the Boldre river. I saw the male fern, the lady fern, the former looking like a coarser form of the latter, the shield fern with much divided fronds, the black spleenwort, and the polypody. The bracken sometimes grows to a great height. We saw some in a hedge about eleven feet high, the tallest I have ever seen.

The ivy on some of the trees is most massive, the stem being about a foot in diameter.

Birds.—The New Forest is a splendid place for birds. Almost the first day we arrived, my brother A—— said he had already seen a number of golden-crested wrens, goldfinches and greenfinches in the garden. The golden-crested wrens in the garden were most entertaining. My brother tried to obtain a photograph of the young ones roosting in an old nest in a

yew tree ; but they were alarmed and left the nest for another old one not far off. The appearance of our kitten caused a great commotion among them. They all came right out on to the branches twittering most vigorously. One day these same wrens afforded me a very pretty sight. Three of the young ones went into a shrub close to me, and wanting to get a better view of them, I approached the tree very cautiously and got within two feet of them with only a low fence between us. They did not seem to notice my presence as I was partly hidden by a bush. There were three of them huddled close together in a fork of a branch. Suddenly they all began chirping, and I saw one of the parents arrive with something in its bill and pop it down one of their throats, held wide open. It then flew off, and in a minute was back again causing great excitement, and another was fed. I think each was fed four times while I was watching. Unfortunately I did not notice the time I was there, but it certainly was not longer than ten minutes. The parent took no notice of me and flew just past my head each time.

Another time my brother attracted my notice to the greenfinch feeding her young. We could see the nest with the young ones in it from the ground. The mother came and alighted on the edge of the nest and let the young ones thrust their heads down her throat, where she stored her food for them. It was not long before the young left the nest, and my brother then showed me how the greenfinch is one of those birds which let the inside of their nest get in a dreadful state of mess.

Once I was sitting on the grass in front of the house, when my attention was attracted by the curious flight of a bird overhead, for he seemed to find it a great effort. I turned away a moment, when somebody immediately exclaimed, "What is that object over there on the ground ? Is it alive ?" I remembered the bird I had seen a moment before overhead and ran to look. Sure enough it was a bird, a pretty little goldfinch. It was already dead, but quite warm. I am almost sure its death was caused by the sting of a nasty brown insect the size of a horse-fly which I found on it (the only one). It was buried in the feathers, and it was most obstinate about being shaken off.

One morning I saw a nuthatch on a yew in the garden. It

is a pretty bird with its slatey blue back and pinkish breast. It was having a fine feast on the red berries.

There was a kingfisher by the river, but it was very shy. I only succeeded in seeing a flash of red and blue as it flew past me.

The woodpecker often laughed at us from the neighbouring trees, but I never saw it, and the owls every night gave us their weird concert.

The pheasants were most abundant, and one evening I heard the keeper whistling to the young pheasants which he was rearing. They appeared immediately from all quarters and raced across a field towards him to be fed.

One night my brother photographed a nest of young swallows by flashlight. Its nest was against a beam in the roof of a barn and there was another overhead. A piece of the planking of this upper barn was sawn out about a foot square, and then we could see the nest just below and fluffy little things inside it. They were packed so closely together, one could scarcely distinguish them. No parent bird was with them. They never woke up during the whole process, and it was so funny to watch the breathing of the feathery mass.

Animals.—Of course the forest ponies are well known. They go about in large groups and are all unshod. However I did not know how numerous donkeys are in the forest. Many of them looked very woeful, as they were in a moulting condition.

Weasels and stoats appear to be rather numerous, but the squirrels were the most interesting. There was one we often noticed in the garden, and one day we happened to see it running across the grass towards the house, holding a large piece of sacking in its mouth. Its progress was much impeded, as it continually tripped on the trailing bit of sacking. However it was most persevering and succeeded in reaching the foot of the fruit tree against the wall of the house, but suddenly seeing us it dropped its burden and disappeared up the tree, where I supposed it had a nest to which it was taking the sacking. He would not touch it again, though we tore the stuff up into smaller pieces.

Another day we saw it when we were standing in the porch of the house. It ran across the green outside the garden gate, and the next minute it came straight up the path towards us. We remained quite still and I had time to notice its rather

peculiar tail. It was of a dullish white colour, and it did not look at all bushy when held erect, for the bone of the tail was easily seen. It came within two feet of us and then turned to the right alongside the house, not hurrying at all. It came to its tree and quickly clambered up. I moved a little to see it better and I think he saw me, for he stopped perfectly still on the tree and remained a long time so; but I was more patient than he, and was rewarded by seeing him suddenly disappear into a hole just below the gutter on the edge of the roof.

Besides the death of the goldfinch, I witnessed a tragedy in *rabbit* life, or rather just missed it. I was in a corn field looking for flowers, when I heard a squeaking and noise in the hedge, and at first I thought it was some birds quarrelling, but it was most persistent and loud. There was a great rustling in the bottom of the hedge and I thought I should be in time to see what was happening, when out rushed a full-grown rabbit just at my feet and sped down the field. It had waited till I was quite close. The squeaking had ceased, and pulling the long grass aside I saw a dear little rabbit twisting helplessly about on the ground. I took it gently in my hands and it lay quite still, and then I noticed a bloody place at the back of its neck, behind its ear. The criminal, whatever it was, had disappeared. I was told later that it must have been a weasel's bite, as it was just the spot where weasels bite the rabbits. I suppose the mother rabbit had arrived too late or was unable to prevent the tragedy. Poor little thing, I felt quite sad for it. It did not seem in any pain, so I laid it down in the grass and left it for the mother. I expect it died quietly soon after.

One evening when I was sitting in a very comfortable perch in a tree just inside a wood, I witnessed much happier scenes among the rabbits. There was a pretty bit of quarry just below the tree, and it was most beautiful with its yellow-brown sides and tufts of thyme growing on the edge, and glimpses of heather between the trees. A path through the wood was in view from my perch. I read for some time and then noticed it was becoming a little dusky. The sound of the wind in the Scotch firs was most delightful. I looked about me, and it was all so still, when suddenly I saw one, two, three rabbits, and big ones, just below me in the bracken at the back of the tree.

They noticed the slight movement I made and immediately remained stock still, just as they were, and if I had not seen them move a minute before I should hardly have known they were there, so well did their colour correspond with their surroundings. "Freezing," is what Ernest Thompson Seton calls it in his delightful book, *Wild Animals I have known*. His story of "Raggylug, the Cottontail," makes all rabbits interesting to me now. "'Freezing' is simply doing nothing, turning into a statue. As soon as he finds a foe near, no matter what he is doing, a well-trained Cottontail keeps just as he is and stops all movement, for the creatures of the wood are of the same colour as the things in the woods and catch the eye only while moving. So when enemies chance together, the one who first sees the other can keep himself unseen by 'freezing,' and thus have all the advantage of choosing the time for attack or escape. Only those who live in the woods know the importance of this; every wild creature and every hunter must learn it; all learn to do it well, but not one of them can beat Molly Cottontail in the doing. . . . . When the white cushion that she always carries to sit on went bobbing away through the woods, of course Rag ran his hardest to keep up. But when Molly stopped and 'froze,' the natural wish to copy made him do the same." So "freezing" is one of the first lessons that a rabbit has to learn.

I remained perfectly still also. *I* "froze." The rabbits began to think all was safe and moved forward again slowly, and then I lost sight of them beneath me in the bracken. Presently I saw quite a number of rabbits in the quarry below me. The little ones came out timidly from the holes in the side of the quarry. They grew bolder, and looked very pretty when they stood up on their heels and nibbled at the ragwort growing there. I think it must have been playfulness, as I should not think they liked the *flowers* of ragwort.

Then one dear little one sat down and busily washed its face, like a kitten. Presently one rabbit came out from the clump of ragwort in the centre into the open. At times he sent messages to the others by thumping on the ground with his hind foot. He appeared to be a sentinel for the rest, and some of his thumps seemed to convey a warning to the others, for *sometimes* they "froze" *immediately*.

Again from Seton's book: "Rabbits telegraph each other by thumping on the ground with their hind feet. Along the ground a thump carries far; a thump that at six feet from the earth is not heard at twenty yards, will near the ground be heard at least one hundred yards. A single *thump* means 'look out' or 'freeze.' A slow *thump thump* means 'come.' A fast *thump thump* means 'danger'; and a very fast *thump thump thump* means 'run for dear life.'" I could not distinguish these different "thumps," but I noticed that they carried different meanings.